TOWN OF CHESHIRE

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OFFICE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Board of Selectmen
Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes –April 16, 2024

Pursuant to a notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the Board of Selectmen was held in person at 191 Church Street (Cheshire Community House) on Tuesday April 16, 2024, at 6:30 PM.

Board of Selectmen Members Present: Shawn McGrath, Chair
Jason Levesque, Vice Chair
Ray Killeen, Member
Michelle Francesconi, Member
Ron DeAngelis, Member

Finance Committee Members Present: John Tremblay, Chair
Kathy Levesque (remote)
Jeff Chaput
Mickey Biagini

Finance Committee Members Absent: Denise Gregoire
Patrick Pettit

Others Present : Jennifer Morse, Town Administrator ; Corey McGrath, DPW Director ; Lynn Melchiori; Peter Traub; I Berkshires; James Brosnan, Northern Berkshire Vocational School District; Bill Craig, Northern Berkshire Vocational School District Rep; Michael Alibozek, Police Chief; Whitney Flynn.

S. McGrath opened the meeting of the Board of Selectmen at 6:30 p.m.
J. Tremblay opened the meeting of the Finance Committee at 6:30 p.m.

Budget Hearings

Northern Berkshire Regional School District
Superintendent James Brosnan and Cheshire School Committee Representative William Craig joined the meeting to discuss the FY25 McCann budget.
Superintendent Brosnan reviewed the budget increases/decreases, transportation funds, Chapter 70, and Student Opportunity Act numbers. Discussion was Technology increases, Curriculum increases specifically for ELA support, Salaries, Professional Development, Supplies, Testing/Assessment/Psych services.

Superintendent Brosnan spoke about the new HVAC building and program and the submission on interest to the Mass School Building Authority for a new roof and windows. It is too early in the process to know if the funds will be granted for the roof/window project.

J. Levesque inquired about the balance in E&D and Revolving Accounts and the Superintendent stated it was approximately $290,291 and that funds are being retained for the roof/window project, he also shared that the Revolving Account is used to offset the budget and keep assessments low.

Police Department

Chief Alibozek joined to discuss the Police Department budget reviewing the line items requests. He shared that the School District is looking for a Student Resource Officer (SRO) for the Middle/High School. The SRO position would be split with the school district including salary, benefits, and specialized equipment. He shared that during off hours the officer would be on duty for the Town.
J. Tremblay expressed his concern that if the funding mechanism and the long-term financial impact of the SRO position.
R. DeAngelis stated that the Town is being forced to have another officer on the police budget, which has gone up substantially in the past three years. Chief Alibozek replied that without the SRO position the budget is relatively level funded.
M. Biagini inquired as to why the position was starting at $62,500, there was discussion about the salary in comparison to other communities, SROs are paid base pay plus a stipend. There was also discussion about hiring a patrol officer to back fill a position, it was pointed out that the town salary for full time officers is underpaid by approximately $10,000 and finding certified officers is extremely difficult due to the POST requirements.
R. DeAngelis shared his concern that the numbers of the department are growing too fast, that Cheshire is too small of a town to be managing the position, he felt that Adams could better absorb the request.
R. Killeen stated that the number of students from Cheshire vs. Adams should be considered and a discussion regarding Jurisdiction and Mutual Agreements ensued, including discussion regarding liability and OPEB costs.
K. Levesque stated that the district should just be told no to this request.

The discussion turned to the new cruiser, Chief Alibozek stated that he would retain the cruiser to be replaced for use by the SRO. He also stated that he could get by with the same two cruisers for another year. There was discussion again on the legality of mutual aid if Adams would come to the table for discussion. The Town Administrator will obtain a legal opinion on jurisdiction/mutual aid and will discuss it with the Town of Adams. Chief Alibozek will report to the next meeting for further discussion.

General Budget Discussion

S. McGrath shared the information on the Tax Rate Recap page of the budget workbook including the numbers needed to maintain appropriate levels of reserves.

M. Francesconi stated that she was not in agreement with the school budget, that too many town needs have been kicked down the road including salary increases, facilities need including the Fire Station. According to the current request from the school district the total deficit is $316,000. J. Levesque expressed his concern that projects keep getting kicked down the road yet every year the school budget increases.
Discussion turned to the options for funding the school budget including a Proposition 2 ½ override. The Town Administrator checked with the Town Clerk and notice needs to be sent sixty-five days prior to the election day, to have it before July 1st the town clerk's office will need to be notified right away. The Town Administrator will get information regarding the election and if it can be rescinded prior to the ballot questions being submitted which is thirty-five days prior.

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by M. Francesconi to notify the Town Clerk to set up an election prior to July 1, 2024.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque – Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath – Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

Finance Committee Adjourn

A motion was made by M. Biagini and seconded by J. Chaput to adjourn at 8:34 p.m.
Vote: Unanimous
Motion Carries: 4-0

Discussion/Decision Items

Senior Survey - The Senior Survey was reviewed and will be shared with the Council on Aging at their next meeting, some suggestions have already been implemented with others in process.

Consent Agenda

- Payroll and AP Warrants
- Minutes – March 19, March 26, April 1

A motion was made by S. McGrath and seconded by M. Francesconi to approve the Consent Agenda with edits to the minutes.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque – Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath – Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

Announcements from Board Members

R. Killeen mentioned a Cheshire Resident who has experience with solar arrays that may benefit a community house roof solar install. He will speak to the resident further and set up a meeting with the Town Administrator and DPW Director.

Public Comment

Peter Traub asked a question about an SRO for the elementary school, he was informed that the request at this time does not include an SRO for the elementary school and that an Adams Officer is currently a frequent visitor as it is in Adams.

Adjournment

A motion was made by J. Levesque and seconded by R. DeAngelis to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m.
Roll Call Vote: R. DeAngelis – Yes; R. Killeen – Yes; J. Levesque – Yes; M. Francesconi – Yes; S. McGrath – Yes
Motion Carries: 5-0

Respectfully Submitted:
Jennifer Morse
April 29, 2024

Document List

1. Agenda –April 16, 2024
2. Northern Berkshire Vocational Regional School District Budget
3. Police Department Budget
4. Senior Center Survey Results
5. Draft Minutes - March 19, 2024, March 26, 2024, April 1, 2024
6. Highway Department Bi-Weekly Report

Approved: May 16, 2024